The Ebensburg Alleghanian.

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I WOULD RATHER BE RIGHT THAN PRESIDENT.—HENRY CLAY.

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Christmas Bells.

The bells—the bells—the Christmas bells!
How merrily they ring!
As if they felt the joy they tell
To every human thing.
The silvery tones, o'er vale and hill,
Are swelling soft and clear,
As wave on wave the tide of sound
Fills the bright atmosphere.

The bells—the merry Christmas bells!
They're ringing in the morn!
They ring when in the Eastern sky
The golden light is born;
They ring when sunshine tips the hills,
And gilds the village spire—
When, through the sky, the sovereign sun
Rolls his full orb of fire.

The Christmas bells—the Christmas bells,
How merrily they ring!
To weary hearts a pulse of joy,
A kindlier life they bring.
The poor man on his couch of straw,
The rich on downy bed,
Hail the glad sounds, as voices sweet
Of angels overhead.

The bells—the silvery Christmas bells,
O'er many a mile they sound!
And household tones are answering them
In thousand homes around.
Voices of childhood, blithe and shrill,
With youth's strong accents blend,
And manhood's deep and earnest tones
With woman's praise ascend.

The bells—the solemn Christmas bells,
They're calling us to prayer;
And hark! the voice of worshipers
Floats on the morning air.
Anthems of noblest praise ascend,
And glorious hymns to-day,
In honor of a Savior born—
Come to the church away!

The Two Kisses.

AN OLD MAN'S CHRISTMAS STORY.

I am an old man; so old am I that, looking back, life seems very long, and yet so short, that I do not know whether many things did not happen in dream. I am hale, and hearty, and merry, for the matter of that; and when I laugh, my laugh rings out clearly and loud, they say; so much so, that it makes the people around, especially my grandchildren, and nephews and nieces, laugh too. And when I laugh the old times come back when others, who are silent now, laughed with me, and then I am suddenly still, and the laugh dies away; and when I think of it, its empty echoes fill my brain just as if it were sleep laughter in a dream.

When I stop laughing so suddenly, for the merriment and enjoyment, and, for the matter of that, the grief and pain of old men, are short and sudden, like those of children—my grandchildren, and nephews and nieces have a great difficulty to stop too; and they choke and nudge each other, and say that is a good story, uncle; almost as good as the story you told us yesterday.

Told yesterday; let me see what it was I told yesterday. How long ago it seems; it must be longer ago than the time when I was only twenty years old, a stalwart, brave fellow, in yellow breeches, black leggings, a heavy, brass bound, leather helmet, with a plume tipped with red, and a clanking sword, which I now could not lift with my two hands. I was a royal volunteer then, prepared to resist the French; and I and some of my companions were encamped in white tents on the coast of Kent.

Yes, people think me very merry. And so, thank, heaven, I am; for I try to stand upright, four-square to the world, as a man should; but being an old man, I have blank places in my heart now, where no love grows; barren spots in my memory, and chilled and numbed parts in my feelings whereto I cannot look back, and whereon I dare not tread and touch lest sudden pain should come back, like the shooting of an old, old wound.

Been in love? Yes, I should think I have; how else could I have grandchildren, those people who laugh so hearty when I laugh, and make me tell how old I am a score of times, and say how well I am looking.

Been in love? I think I was talking of that, was I not? Yes, been in love!—Well, we did love when I was a young fellow, and I recollect my Alice, and I recollect her as I loved her when she was very young, and as I love her now. I think she could do anything but drink and smoke or tell an untruth, or do a wrong action. Her face was a sweet oval; her hair a very dark brown, nearly black; and her eyes were a deep blue, full of merriment at one moment, aye, at all moments, except when she heard a sad story or was touched with pain for any one else, and they grew deeper and deeper as they filled with tears. Not for herself. She never cried for herself that I know of, for she never had a day's illness. But she was terribly cut up when her brother died, and that you see was how I knew her. Her brother was my right-hand man in my company. Many's the time he stood shoulder to shoulder to me, good at drill, good at song—good at anything. He used to live near the coast; and, indeed, he joined us, and I was one of his tent-fellows, and his chum.

Well, he knew people that I knew, and we were soon friends; and he took me home to show me Alice. He was always talking about her, and she about him; and when he was there, scarce a look did she give me. Her brother—his name was Joe, and mine too—could do everything, and was the be-all and end-all of the world, I used to think; and so one day I tried to run with Joe, and Joe beat me, and Alice laughed; and then I shot against Joe, and he beat me too, and she laughed the more; and I wrestled with him and threw him; she didn't laugh then, but ran to see whether he was hurt, and said it wasn't fair for Joe to tackle a big fellow like me, although he was nigh an inch taller. In short, I could not please her anyhow.

Well, it was one day when we heard that the flat-bottomed boats of old Boney were not coming over, and that the army of Boulogne had melted, bit by bit, away like a snowdrift, that we made a night of it. Ay, it was a night, too! and, being hot and in the summer, we must need keep up the fun till the sun came up over the seacoast, looking red and angry at our folly. Well, Joe and I, the two Joes, as they called us, ran down to the beach and washed our hot faces, and plunged in the fresh, salt waves, and were in a minute as fresh and merry as larks. And after dressing, Joe must needs take a walk with me, who was nothing loath, you must know, along the edge of the cliff. The seas for centuries have been washing that chalk-bound coast, and at intervals there stand up pillars of chalk, with seas around them. The people call such a place "No Man's Land," and no man can own it, truly.—Well, Joe came to one of those within a few feet, say twelve, from the cliff, and turning to me said, "Joe, Junior," said he, I think I see his bright face now, "I challenge you to jump on that 'No Man's Land,' I do."

"Joe," said I, hurriedly, "don't be a fool? It maybe would give way at the top, and if it did not, how could you jump back without a run. You'd be struck on the top like a mad sentinel or a pillar saint. I'm not going to jump it."

"But I am," said he. And before I could stop him, if needed I had tried, he took a run and jumped.

It was so sudden that I could only stand aghast when I saw him there. He stood, indeed, for a moment, and then he took a back step, and would have jumped back, when I heard a rumbling sound, and half the top of the "No Man's Land" part, and the chalk and earth, and Joe, too, fell down with a crash on the rocky coast below.

I ran round the little creek to the other side of a small bay, and throwing myself down on the turf, stretched my neck over, looked over and cried out, "Joe! Are you hurt, Joe!"

A faint voice came up, and I could see the poor fellow struggling under a huge piece of chalk which seemed to hold him down in agony. He smiled in a ghastly way, and said, "Run, Joe, run! the tide's coming in!"

Well, I did run, and we got ropes from the tents, and a few strong fellows held them as I swung over the cliff, just reaching poor Joe as the cold water was lap, lap, lapping up to his mouth, taking away his breath and then running back, crawling over him and leaving bubbles of salt foam, as if in sport. I got him out, but he could not stand. Some bones were broken and he was badly bruised, so that I was forced to tie him to a rope, and they hauled him up, and we took him home.

Well, well, to make a long story short, poor Joe died, with my praise on his lips, and Alice bowed her head like a broken lily. It was a long time before she got over it, and summer had grown into winter, and winter to summer, to autumn, and to winter again. The threatening invasion was all over; our swords were getting rusty, our uniforms dirty, and when the holidays came I left the firm in which I was a partner, and went to spend a fortnight at my old friend's in Kent.

Alice was there, well and cheerful now, and reconciled to her loss, though we often talked of poor Joe, and as the days wore on we grew closer together, and she called me by name, and seemed to have transferred her brother's love to me. She never told me so or let others see it, till one merry Christmas night, when she rejected all her cousins and her other friends, and would only dance with me.

We had the mistletoe too. At last, one madcap fellow proposed that the ladies should kiss the gentlemen all around when and how they could; and Alice should play, too; and she, in a solemn, quiet way, smiling sadly, and yet sweetly, too, took me beneath the Christmas bough, and kissed me on the lips.

Ay, it's many years ago, but I feel it now. My heart beat so fast that I hardly dared return it; but I put my arm around her and took her gently by the bay window of the old hall, saying, as I pressed her hand, "Alice, dear Alice, did you mean that kiss?"

Well, I need not tell you what she answered. 'Tis fifty years ago, fifty years ago! and I am surrounded by Alice's dear grandchildren, and there is one, a little thing with light and golden hair that will deepen into brown, who plays around my knees and tells me her little stories, her sorrows, and her joys; so quick, so hurried in their coming and their going that they are like my own, and as we talk, we grow quite friends and companions, as my Alice was to me.

Bless you, she understands it all. She is a woman in her pretty ways; her poutings, pettings, and quarrelings. She manages her household of one wax-doll and two wooden ones, and tells me, for the wax-doll is the lady and the two wooden ones are the servants in mob caps and stuff gowns, when they gossip with a wooden policeman, who belongs to her brother, little Joe.

So we are fast friends, little Alice and I; and to-night, on Christmas night, I noticed that she would not dance or play with the pink and shiny-faced little boys who were unnaturally tidy and clean in their new knickerbockers, with red stockings; but she came and sat by me, and talked softly in the firelight as Alice did, and made me think of fifty years ago. And only think how old times come back and new times, like the old; only just think, that when her mother told her she should choose a sweetheart, she got a little bit of mistletoe, and climbing slily on my knee, and holding me in talk, as if to hide her purpose, though I guessed it soon. I tell you, she put her little doll-like arm around my neck, and holding the mistletoe above my head, she kissed me again and again, and said I was her sweetheart.

So this child-sweetheart brought the old times back—the times that are still so distant and so near; and the sweet kiss 'neath the rustling leaves made me think of my dead Alice in the grave.

Retta's Christmas Eve.

"Writing *to-day*, Retta?" The question came in a tone of surprise, as Mr. Saunders saw pen, ink, and paper placed upon the little table at his bedside.

"Yes, indeed, papa. Why not?"

"Why, you told me yesterday of wonderful preparations for my Christmas dinner, all to be made to-day; of turkey to stuff, chicken pie to manufacture, pies to bake, and pudding to boil, sauce to sweeten, and gravies to spice—"

"Stop! stop! Allow me to remark, sir, that I am afraid your exalted ideas will have to come down before your dinner! But all is done. Was I not up before the peep of day, baking and preparing, in order to have time to spare for the editor of the *Evening Star*, who wants, if you please, something *funny*? Funny! My brains are baked as dry as a chip, and my head would certainly rattle if anybody would take the trouble to shake it! Now, papa, here is the pen, there the ink, and under my hand the paper; only one thing is wanted—I haven't the ghost of an idea."

"It is all some writers ever do have, and dreadful hard it seems to be to raise it."

"Do you mean to be personal, Mr. Saunders?"

"Not at all, Miss Retta. But what are you going to write, and *must* it be done to-day? You look tired."

"I am not very tired, only rather weary of pots and pans. Literature will make an agreeable variety. Ain't it funny, papa, to come from such direfully matter-of-fact topics as roast meat and apple pies to the 'Sorrows of Seraphina' or the 'wails of a broken spirit?' But this won't write my funny article. Oh dear! What *is* funny? I ain't. I feel as solemn as that historical animal, a church owl, though, mind you, papa, I am by no means prepared to grant that an owl is any more solemn in a church than he is out of it."

"Where are all the unfinished articles you were talking about the other day?"

"Oh, those are my heroics! They ain't funny. They are the wonderful productions that are one day to place me at the head of American authoresses, and send my name, wreathed in laurels, down to posterity. They are to be the evidences of the 'startling original genius' of our talented contributor, Retta Somers, the highly-finished artistic finish of which, etc., etc. You know all about it."

"Well, why don't you finish them?"

"Because—whisper, papa; walls have ears—I cannot, if my life depended on it, think of a single 'startling original' line for one of them."

"Won't any of them do for this emergency?"

"Well, there is the young man who fell in love with the young lady——"

"My dear, can you complain of want of originality?"

"Don't be sarcastic, sir. And the young lady drives him to despair by flirting with young man number two, and I stopped there, and have not decided whether it shall be suicide or pistols for two. Then, there is my mysterious murder, but I have made the mystery so deep that I don't see how in the world I can ever explain it—and anyhow it isn't funny."

"Couldn't you introduce a comic song?"

"Now, papa! As if bringing one's muse down to a caterer for bread and butter was not sufficiently aggravating without being made fun of! Come, sir, I'll forgive you if you tell me something to write about."

"Put away your pen, then, and come here, close to me. Lay your hand in mine, and now listen. Once upon a time——"

"Now, papa, you are going to make fun of me."

"You asked me to make fun for you, but you must not interrupt me. Once upon a time, not many years ago, there lived in the pleasant city of P—— a gentleman, who had one little daughter.—Many years before, when this little girl was a wee baby in his arms, he had laid his wife in her long, narrow home, and taken this tiny pledge of her love into his inmost heart. He loved the child fondly, yet in his love he was blind to many things that might have made her happier. As he loved books, music, and painting, he made her life one round of study and sweet sounds and sights, neglecting those little feminine pursuits a woman loves and craves. She was his scholar and companion, trained to masculine tastes, yet gentle and womanly by nature and a higher instinct than her father could teach. As she passed from child to woman, her father read upon her broad white brow and in her clear blue eyes a talent he had never possessed, and by gentle urging he trained the gift till his eyes were gladdened by reading all the pure outpourings of his child's genius. A poet born, her prose was full of gems, and her pen became her dearest treasure."

"Papa!"

"Listen, Retta. One day, upon all this dreaming life of pleasant intercourse there came a blow, sudden as the thunder in a sunny summer day. The trustees who held the wealth that had made this life an easy one to indulge in, failed, and swept off at once the whole fortune upon which those two depended. This was not all; a fall upon the ice crippled the father so incurably that he was chained by his injuries to his bed, dependent for actual bread upon his child, whose eighteenth summer had just opened—a fair, loving blossom, trained to a life of luxurious ease. It was then he learned his mistake; when watching the noble nature that conquered all difficulty, he saw how the fastidious taste shrank from such domestic labors as most women love. With many a pang of bitter self reproach, he saw the most commonplace duties of a poor house fulfilled by fingers trained to glide over the ivory keys of a grand piano, saw the busy little hands he had so often watched guiding the pen now roughened and soiled by cooking, dusting, and sweeping, and knew his fair child a martyr in every detail."

"No, no! Love made the tasks easy. What could repay the years of care such a father had lavished? She were a disgrace to her sex if such memory did not gild the most menial task."

"Hush, Retta, listen. When the little ready money that had served at first was gone, the talent that had been the father's pride became his support. Other eyes than his loving ones learned to scan and grew to praise his child's works, and day after day piles of neatly written sheets were transformed into food, medicines, and clothing. Perhaps this might have become the life of these two, content to always continue all to each other; but one was a woman, with a loving heart and noble womanly nature. Visiting this pair, passing whole hours by the bedside of the invalid, was a young doctor, whose love for his profession at first drew him often to study an interesting case, but who came soon from a deeper motive. The father, from his prison bed, had grown to watch his child's face so closely that every tho't of her heart was transparent to him, so he soon read in her eyes the secret she tried to hide, and knew that those two, both dear to him, were still more dear each to the other. Retta, why do you weep?—There was no shame in such love; it was sought with manly frankness by one worthy to win it. Still, there was a bar. The young doctor was poor, and when he told his love, the maiden would not burden him with a helpless invalid, neither would she leave her father."

"Oh, papa, how did you know?"

"The lover himself told the invalid, who then wrote to see if a hospital could not afford him a home."

"Never! Papa, you break my heart."

"Not yet, for the story does not end so. Christmas was coming, and the day before, while the child was busy in the kitchen at her distasteful work, the young doctor came to pay his daily visit. His story was worthy of a novel, for he had received a legacy from an aunt sufficient to keep him in luxury. He had purchased a house, and a deed of gift made it his Christmas present to the father of the woman he loved. To-night, Retta, this father and lover move into their new domicile, and the child, the loving girl who has so patiently borne dark days, will she not come to gladden bright ones?"

It was evening when the flitting was made, and in the new home the loving father gave away his treasure to stronger protection, while there was no happier heart in that large city, than little Retta's on that Christmas Eve.

THE first traces of Christmas observance found in ancient history are early in the second century, at least prior to A. D. 138. In some churches, the Epiphany and Christmas were celebrated as one festival. In the fourth century, after an elaborate investigation, the 25th of December was agreed upon as Christmas, and has ever since been observed throughout Christendom. There may still be unbelievers, but the historical and astronomical evidences in favor of this day amount to almost a demonstration, if such language can ever be applied to that class of testimony.

We derive our Christmas customs more immediately from old England, where it was a religious, domestic, and merry-making festival for every rank and age.

On Christmas Eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas Eve the mass was sung;
That only night in all the year,
Saw the stolid priest, the chalice rear.
Then opened wide the Baron's hall,
To vassal, tenant, serf and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose.
All hailed with uncontrolled delight
And general voice, the happy night
That to the cottage as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.
England was merry England when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
A poor man's heart through half the year.

The custom was to deck houses and churches with evergreens, to remain until Candlemas day, (Feb. 2d.) An English substitution, alluded to by Shakspeare, declared that on Christmas eve no evil spirit stirred abroad, no witch or fairy had power to charm, so hallowed was the time. And a famous hawthorn in the churchyard of Glaftonbury always budded on the 24th and blossomed on the 25th of December, and refused, on the reformation of the calendar, to change from the old to the new style. All our standard Christmas hymns, some of them the best in our language, are of English origin. In this country, the New England Puritans made an indiscriminate warfare upon the usages of Christmas, good and bad. Its pleasant and sacred institutions, however, were too deeply imbedded in the popular heart to allow them to be set aside by the logic of these cold, stern men. Even the women and children around their own hearthstones, would celebrate Christmas in spite of their frowns. It has become a legal holiday in most of the States—is observed by giving presents, and is ushered in by religions service.

The Mountaineer Base Ball Club.

EBENSBURG, Dec. 18, 1868.

To the Editors of The Alleghanian:

The base ball season having closed, I propose, with your permission, to briefly review the play of the Mountaineer Club during the summer just past.

During the season, the Club played nine first class games, eight of which it won, and lost one.

The first game of the season was played with the Mountain Stars of Altoona, in Ebensburg, June 20th. Score:

Innings—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Mountaineers	9	4	0	2	1	14	19	2	6	—57
Mountain Stars	4	9	0	0	0	1	3	3	0	—20

The second game was with the Ionians of Chest Springs, at Chest Springs, June 27th. Score:

Innings—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Mountaineers	3	8	3	7	9	7	0	6	6	—49
Ionians	6	0	3	0	4	0	4	2	2	—21

The third game was with the St. Augustines, of St. Augustine, at Chest Springs, June 27th. Score:

Innings—	1	2	3	4	5	
Mountaineers	6	5	12	7	7	—37
St. Augustines	1	3	17	2	1	—24

The fourth game was the return game with the Mountain Stars of Altoona, at Altoona, July 4th. Score:

Innings—	1	2	3	4	5	
Mountaineers	11	9	3	17	2	—42
Mountain Stars	0	1	1	2	5	— 9

The fifth game was the return game with the St. Augustine club, at Ebensburg, August 1st. Score:

Innings—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Mountaineers	4	7	3	21	10	6	5	—56
St. Augustines	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	— 3

The sixth game was with the Kickenapawlings of Johnstown, at Ebensburg, August 7th. Score:

Innings—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Mountaineers	4	2	5	2	4	5	0	5	0	—27
Kicks	5	4	8	4	0	1	2	0	1	—25

The seventh game was with the Muffins of Cresson, at Ebensburg, August 12th. Score:

Innings—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Mountaineers	9	6	2	11	10	12	3	8	4	—65
Muffins	7	2	1	1	2	14	0	0	3	—30

The eighth game was the return game with the Ionians of Chest Springs, at Ebensburg, August 22d. Score:

Innings—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Mountaineers	2	9	10	9	7	2	9	13	10	—71
Ionians	2	7	1	3	0	3	3	0	1	—20

The ninth game was the return game with the Kickenapawlings of Johnstown, at Johnstown, August 28th. Score:

Innings—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Mountaineers	4	3	2	1	0	6	2	0	1	—19
Kicks	1	3	3	3	7	3	3	0	4	—27

It will be seen by the above that the Mountaineers won eight out of the nine games played, making a grand total of 423 runs, against 179 runs by all opponents—or two to one in favor of the Mountaineers, and 65 runs over.

The Mountaineer Club was organized in 1866, and has played, in all, 20 match games. Of these, it won 17 and lost 3, making a grand total of 988 runs, to 464 by all opponents—or over two to one in favor of the Mountaineers.

This is a record of which our Club has just reason to be proud. Probably no club in the western part of the State can match it, either in the number of games played, the number of games won, or in the preponderance of runs made over opponents.

J.